11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

845 In cases of difficult labour a ploughman may be called in to lift and shake the woman gently, which it is thought will produce the desired effect. The reason given is that as he shakes and scatters the seed on the earth, so also he ought to produce a good effect here.

[752] A nail which has got into the foot is always thrown into the fire.

757 *Leecheraft.*—Though regular medical assistance is usually sought for serious complaints, yet, the more common ailments are often ● 278 treated by the people themselves, several of the older men and women enjoying some local celebrity for this.

The following list of substances used medicinally was collected; it is believed to be but a small fraction of the local pharmacopœia.

(A.) Animal substances.—Saliva is used for many purposes; thus button scurvy is treated by spitting on the floor and rubbing on the mixed saliva and dust with the right thumb.

Seal oil is rubbed in for sprains and rheumatism, for which it has a great reputation locally; it is sold in Belmullet at a pretty high price.

The tongue of a fox is used as a poultice to extract thorns, &c.

(B.) Herbs.—Mr. Nolan kindly provided the following list of plants in use in the district, most of which he has seen used. The qualities of many of these were alsodescribed to me by several of the country people.

Dandelion (*Leocntolon taraxacum*), used for "liver troubles."

Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*), used as a styptic.

Samphire (*Crithmum maritimum*), used, boiled in milk, for heart-burn.

Self-heal (locally called Heartsease) (*Brunella vulgaris*), used for palpitations.

Mountain sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), used "for the heart" and in cough mixtures.

Ground-wood, or log-bark (not identified), used for gravel (boiled in milk).

Bugloss (*Echium* or *Lycopsis*), used, in poultices with oat-meal, for abscesses, &c.

Ground-ivy (*Nepeta glechoma*), used, as a "tea," for "heart beat," or mixed with other herbs for a cough.

Nettles (*Urtica dioica*), used, with ginger, for "wind on the stomach."

Ivy (*Hedera helix*) leaves used as a cap for a "scabby head."

Burdock root (*Arctium lappa*),
Furze tops (*Ulex*),
Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*),
Carageen moss (*Sphærococcus europæus*),
} usually combined and boiled with sugar-stick to form a cough-syrup.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), used as an expectorant. 757
Marsh-mallow (*Althæa officinalis*), used as poultice for "sore breast." 278
Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*), used as an infusion for coughs.
Parsely (*Petroselinum sativum*), boiled in milk for "gravel."
Belladonna (*Atropa belladonna*), used for palpitation or "heart beat."

It will be seen from this list that several of the remedies used are officinal; and others, though not officially recognised, possess medicinal properties.

3. *Legends and Traditions.*—There are many of these current in the district, but only a small number could be collected. Among all these, few bearing on the early history of this region seem to have come down to the present time, except the tradition of a great battle fought at Cross, in the Mullet, between the people of the country, and an invading army under a king of Munster who was slain in the fight, and over whose remains a tumulus was erected. 173

There is, so far as could be ascertained, no tradition as to the origin of the earlier inhabitants, either of the mainland, or of the islands; but the families whose ancestors came from Ulster two centuries ago are well known, and sometimes are called by the name Ultagh, instead of their own surnames. [551]

It would be expected that there would be some tales connected with the duns, of which there are several, but very few seem to be known, even the oldest inhabitants not seeming to have heard any history of them. The story of Dun Donald, related by Knight,[1] the vague tradition that Dunamoa was built by the Burkes, and besieged by the "Danes"; and another concerning Dun Fiachrach, which is believed to have been a favourite resting place for the children of Lir, and the fishermen of the neighbourhood say that the founder of the fort used to ride a "water-horse," on which he could leap across the deep caves on to the cliffs on each side of the dun. Many of the people ascribe these forts to "the Danes."

The favourite tales and poems are either ancient myth, or of a semi-religious character; legends of the saints forming a large portion of the old chroniclers' stock.

Mr Knight says[2]—"It is not from these cairns (Seefins) alone we claim Fingal and Ossian as *peculiarly* ours; we have heard them in *real song*, and many a winter's evening have I heard the old chronicler lying on his back quietly, in the bed beyond the fire, repeat the

[1] P. Knight, Erris, &c., p. 166.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

figured in the economy of the farm or in medicinal and magical lore would be an almost endless task. One recalls that a group of Californian Indians practising a food-gathering economy is said to have made use of 176 species of wild plants for satisfying almost all their needs. A few examples of the survival of a collecting culture in Ireland may be given, taken from various sources such as Wood-Martin's pioneer work, but also from folk-memory. From the roots of ferns were extracted oils used in weaving, from those of the water lily, a cherished red dye, a substance for tanning from tormentil roots, and ink from the roots of flags (saggins). Bracken and wood ash were kept for making soap, and the ashes of thistles were the perquisite of the herdsmen. Large lake rushes provided materials for caulking boats and churns, and phragmites stems for winding yarn in the shuttle. Lady's bedstraw besides being rubbed on bee-skeps to attract a swarm, produced both dye and rennet. For cures we have the carrageen or Irish moss as well as the moss growing on crosses and other special stones, and a great number of flowers and herbs. Yarrow, in Irish, is called 'the herb of the seven cures'. But the sovereign remedy was the essence of all wild flowers contained in what was euphemistically known as 'all-flower water', i.e., cow's urine.[1] We shall return to these topics in Chapter XXI.

[1]W. G. Wood-Martin, *The Elder Faiths*, 2, 183.

Note. Mr. A. T. Lucas has recently published accounts of hurling balls made of cowhair (see *J.C.H. and A. Soc.*, 57, 99–104; 59, 78–81).